



# Blackfoot Church of Christ

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## How Much Is a Picture Really Worth?

By Edward Bragwell

A preacher friend and his wife, both now deceased, were listening to a lecture on the value of visuals in teaching and preaching. The lecturer referred to the old saying: A picture is worth a thousand words. My friend said his wife whispered to him, If that is so, I wonder why God did not inspire the Apostles and Prophets to draw pictures.

Now, just for the record, this is not about using visual aids in preaching and teaching. Our sister was not opposed to these, nor am I. Well-chosen illustrated photographs, paintings, drawings, maps, artifacts, etc., can be useful tools of teaching as long as they don't overshadow the words of the lesson.

It is just that I have been thinking, which is always dangerous for me, of the implications of the saying and the good sisters observation about it. While sometimes, in our daily communication, that old saying may well be apropos, like referring to an unusual sunset, sunrise or waterfall, a cute baby or child, or some other wondrous thing in the world. When it comes to Gods revelation to man, it is a different matter. After all, God chose to reveal himself, his wisdom, and his will using words, not pictures:

Which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those {words-eob} taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. (1 Corinthians 2:13 NAS). Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. (2 Timothy 4:2 NAS) (Emp. mine eob).

It is hard to overstate the power in words, especially words coming from God. Peter tells us that it was by the word of God that the heavens and earth came into being (2 Peter 3:5 see also Hebrews 11:3). Remember Genesis 1 says that God said ... and it was so. Peter also declares that we are born again by the word of God (1 Peter 1:23). Cornelius was told words whereby he could be saved (Acts 11:14). It is the

word of God that produces faith (Romans 10:17). Paul urged the Thessalonians to comfort one another with words. (1 Thessalonians 4:18). The word of God is said to be powerful and sharper than a two-edged sword (Hebrews 4:12). The words of Jesus will judge us in the last day (John 12:48).

The power of words is also recognized in the secular world:

“Words are singularly the most powerful force available to humanity. We can choose to use this force constructively with words of encouragement, or destructively using words of despair. Words have energy and power with the ability to help, to heal, to hinder, to hurt, to harm, to humiliate and to humble.” – Yehuda Berg (As quoted in the Huffington Press).

“Throughout human history, our greatest leaders and thinkers have used the power of words to transform our emotions, to enlist us in their causes, and to shape the course of destiny. Words can, not only create emotions, they create actions. And from our actions flow the results of our lives.” – Tony Robbins

“Words have the power to both destroy and heal. When words are both true and kind, they can change our world.” – Anonymous

“The pen is mightier than the sword” – Edward Bulwer-Lytton

If pictures had been so much more effective in conveying Gods message, then a lot of expense could have been saved over the years. Taking the ratio of one picture to a thousand words literally, let’s see what could have happened.

According to one website blog the average Bible has about 807,370 words covering 1,200 pages. With 1 picture equaling 1,000 words, we have about the equivalent of 808 pictures (rounded off). Allowing just 1 picture per page, a 1,200 page book is reduced to 808 pages. Allowing 2 pictures per page, it is reduced to 404 pages. And peradventure you allow 3 pictures per page, our book is further reduced to 270 pages. Quiet a savings in publishing costs, wouldn’t you say?

Sometimes commentators speak of Gods two revelations: His natural revelation and His special revelation. The natural revelation being that which we observe from nature, Gods material creation. The special revelation being that spoken and written by the inspiration of God.

In reality, there is but one revelation, the one given to the world in words. It was first spoken, then written by inspired men (the Bible). The so called natural revelation, though God-made, was not designed to be God’s revelation to man but to illustrate and re-enforce His revelation consisting of words. There is a saying that goes something like this: Illustrations don’t prove anything, they just illustrate.

It takes words to convey Gods nature, His purpose, and His will to mankind. Without knowing His words, what one gets from observing His material creation is

subjective. Yes, scientists and apologists may deduce, beyond a reasonable doubt, that the universe came into being by intelligent design rather than random chance; but they cannot identify and get to know the Intelligent Designer without the words of His revelation.

Let's not get so carried away with the effect of powerful scenes and images that we forget that it is the power of words that draw people to God and give them a working knowledge of Him. At best the visuals, either man-made or God-made, can only raise the curiosity of the observer, prompting him to try to find the words explaining the facts behind the images.

Before we close this article, let's notice two passages that are widely used to support the idea of natural revelation as separate from special revelation. The first being the 19th Psalm. This does not speak of the heavens and firmament literally imparting the knowledge of God. First, it should be noted that this is the poetic language of the Psalmist. The heavens and firmament do not literally speak. They only speak in the sense of illustrating to those who already know God, having previously heard His words spoken to them by His appearing and speaking directly to their forefathers. If mankind could come to know God by just observing the wonders of His natural creation, why did He bother to appear and speak His revelation in the first place? The Psalm goes on to say, in verses 7 and 8, The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. It takes the law and statutes delivered in words to convert, assure, and enlighten us as pertaining to God.

The second being Romans 1:16-32. In these verses, Paul points out why the Gentile world of his day was without excuse for not knowing God. In doing this, He then points to His creation as the reason why they should know God. In the second chapter, he shows why the Jews were without excuse. They had for years had in their possession Gods written laws for them. The Gentiles (pagans) did not have that. So, we are sometimes told that the pagans should have known God solely by observing the things created by God.

If you read the text closely, you should notice that they were condemned for not retaining the knowledge of God previously revealed to them. In times past God has spoken to their forefathers revealing Himself and His will to them. Note verse 20, "when they knew God." They should have retained that knowledge. Instead, they did not like that revelation, so they turned away from what they had received and knew; and became vain in their imaginations and turned to all kinds of debauchery. They were without excuse because they should have been reminded of all that had been previously revealed every time they looked at the marvelous illustrations in His marvelous creation.

## Prayer Requests & Announcements

- Brenda is recovering from surgery on her ankle
- Porters will be traveling home today
- Tim Woodside will be traveling to Blackfoot today
- Connie Adams is recovering from a stroke he had this week.
- Keep April in your prayers as she deals with health issues
- The Christians in the Philippines.
- Bible class tonight 6:00pm at Chad and Kass' on evangelism
- Monthly business meeting is scheduled for today

**For prayer requests, call or text**

Chad @ (208) 221-2587 or Ross @ (208) 680-6590

## Assignments

<p><b><u>Today</u></b> <b>Bible Study</b> – Ross Ward <b>Song Leader</b> – Chad Mitchell <b>Lord's Table</b> – Ben Palmer <b>Sermon</b> – Ross Ward</p>	<p><b><u>Wednesday</u></b> <b>Bible Study</b> – Chad Mitchell <b>Song Leader</b> – Chad Mitchell <b>Invitation</b> – Ross Ward</p>
<p><b><u>Next Sunday</u></b> <b>Bible Study</b> – Ross Ward <b>Song Leader</b> – David Porter <b>Lord's Table</b> – Tom Mitchell <b>Sermon</b> – Ross Ward</p>	<p><b><u>Next Wednesday</u></b> <b>Bible Study</b> – Chad Mitchell <b>Song Leader</b> – David Porter <b>Invitation</b> – Ross Ward</p>

Blackfoot Church of Christ  
370 North Shilling Ave.  
Blackfoot, Idaho 83221

### **Meeting Times:**

Sunday Morning Classes 10:00AM  
Sunday Morning Worship 11:00AM  
Wednesday Evening 7:30PM



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